The Builder.

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THE suggestion which appeared first in our columns, that Buckingham Palace, unfit for her Majesty's residence, should be appropriated as the National Gallery, has been received with favour universally, and reiterated in various quarters. Notice has been given by Sir Frederick Trench, that he will, at the commencement of next session, move that Buckingham Palace is no longer a fit residence for her Majesty and her family, and cannot be made so; but that there is a desirable site for a palace at the south terrace of Kensington-gardens, near some venerable chesnut trees, on which a new palace ought to be built [subject, we should conceive, however, to her Majesty's approval]; and that the House will make good the necessary expense for the erection, *if any shall be needed*. And another honourable member, we understand, is ready to move, with the concurrence of part of her Majesty's Government, that the present palace be appropriated to the purpose we have suggested.

Independently of the long complained of shabbiness of that edifice, which, above every other secular building in the realm, ought to be magnificent, both without and within, especially in the eyes of foreign visitors, many of whom have ridiculed both it and us for allowing it to stand as such,—every one now appears, as it were by simultaneous intuition, to have become convinced that such an erection as Buckingham Palace, *in the face of the truly noble and Briton-worthy accommodation now being afforded to the Lords and Commons* of the realm, can and must no longer stand as the chief accommodation of the royal *superiors both of Lords and Commons*. Hence the ready reception of any feasible suggestion, by means of which an end so amenable to even our own self-respect, and to a proper respect for us in the estimation of other nations, independently altogether of our loyalty as subjects, would appear to be most easily, surely, and speedily accomplished.

The remarks of a sensible and able critic of the last century on St. James's Palace, are not only still applicable to the present question, but appear to have been written with peculiar and prophetic reference to the present moment.

"'Twill admit of no debate," says the author of the *Critical Review*, "that the court of a monarch ought to be the centre of all politeness; and a grand and elegant outside would seem, at least, an indication of a like perfection within: we may safely add, that this is necessary even in a political sense; for strangers very naturally take their impressions of a whole people by what they see at court, and the people themselves are, and ought to be, dazzled by the august appearance of majesty, in every thing that has any relation to it. I could wish, therefore, that ways and means could be invented to bring about this necessary point; that Britain might assert her own taste and dignity, and vie in elegance, as well as power, with the most finished of her neighbours."

Unluckily, however, for the new proposition, the grant of 20,000*l.*, in part of the estimated cost of the alterations in the palace, proposed to fit it for the Queen's residence, is made, so that unless there be some act of will on the part of the Government and her Majesty, the works will be far advanced before the next session of Parliament, and will afford a strong argument against the proposed change. On many accounts it is much to be regretted that the vote was so hastily come to. There was no satisfactory assurance before the House, that the building would be made quite fit for its purpose by the expenditure proposed, but, moved to pity and indignation by the architect's touching picture of their royal mistress's miserable home, they at once in a fine frenzy of loyalty, cried "aye" to the question, in spite of the warning voice of Mr. Hume, and began to think of its inexpediency directly afterwards.*

We trust that some member of the House will inquire of the Government, before the close of the session, whether or not any change has been made in their intentions, relative to the matter in question. If the reply be in the negative, some fuller information should be afforded, and facilities given for the examination of the plans proposed. When the public money is to be spent, the public have a right to demand an assurance satisfactory to themselves, that it will be wisely applied.

The necessity for this supervision on the part of the public is made evident, amongst numerous examples, by the new façade of the British Museum, now rapidly progressing. We have all proper respect for the architect of that structure, Sir Robert Smirke, and are not about to offer any hasty remark on the elevation *per se*, at this moment. Surely, however, if the design had been made public before the works were commenced, some alteration would have been insisted on, and instead of *repeating the Post-office*, Sir Robert would have been led to design a new building, to the great improvement of the metropolis and his own manifest advantage as regards posterity. Something might still be done to improve it.

The refusal of information in this case, which was loudly asked for in various quarters, was taken very quietly by the public, but, taught wisdom by the past, they may probably not be so soon satisfied in another. It is premature, however, to complain till the grievance is certain.

THE DETACHED BAPTISTERY OF ITALY,

ILLUSTRATED FROM THE EXAMPLE AT PISA.†

THE custom of grouping together the cathedral, the campanile, the burial ground, and the baptistery, was one peculiar to Italy. The cathedrals on this side the Alps, or such as were abbey churches, afford examples of a similar combination, but with these points of difference, that the buildings were not detached, and that the baptistery was peculiar to Italy. It is true, that within the church, it was not unusual to *inclose* the font;‡ and Elgin Cathedral furnishes a solitary instance, where the octagonal baptistery groups with the cathedral. It seems, that great importance was attached to the rite of baptism at the hands of the bishop, and wherever there was a cathedral, we usually find a round or octagonal structure for the purpose. In the early ages of the Church, baptism was practised by total immersion. Adult baptism was usual, and as the rite was in that case united to that of confirmation, and the chrism, or oil of unction, could be imparted only by the bishop, the ceremony required a large building for the crowds, who presented themselves at Easter, Pentecost, and Epiphany. Subsequently, a change took place in the ceremonial, and the baptisteries were almost deserted. The circular form was well adapted for the ceremony, and the more usual form of the octagon, if it had a symbolical meaning, also presented less difficulty in construction. Sometimes the external outline was circular, and the internal octagonal, and in the octagonal baptistery at Parma, the interior had sixteen sides. But it is not improbable that the plan had an origin distinct from that of adaptation to the purpose. It is commonly thought, that the circular temples, such as that of Vesta, at Rome, gave the idea of the circular church to Constantine. This may have been the case, though the notion has been ridiculed;§ and, indeed, the form of the circle would hardly require to be suggested by any building. The detached columns of the Temple are external, with an entablature, not internal, as in the baptistery, where, generally, they support arches. The circle, probably, was not generally employed in a baptistery, before it had been used in a building of different origin. We, of course, allude to the church of the Holy Sepulchre; and if it be recollected, that the sepulchres of Hadrian and Cecilia Metella had the circular form, we can hardly resist the conclusion, that Constantine took the plan of the Christian church from one which was generally adopted. Moreover, the circular building, now the church of Sta. Constanza, is undoubtedly that, which was built for, or used as a baptistery by Constantine, and afterwards converted into a sepulchre for his daughters Constantia and Helena. It would be interesting to determine satisfactorily, whether this use of the building preceded or succeeded the erection of the Holy Sepulchre; but, at least, we are at present in possession of some clue to the origin of the use of the circular plan, and to the relationship of the baptistery and the circular church. Indeed, the baptistery, though not always styled a church, had its separate altar, and was essentially the same. The baptistery of San Giovanni Laterano, erroneously called the "Baptistery of Constantine," was probably not built till after the death of the emperor, and, therefore, would not afford us any assistance.

The baptistery at Pisa stands immediately opposite to the western façade of the cathedral, and is an edifice of great beauty, but of very peculiar style. Its plan forms a circle of nearly 100 feet diameter, inclosing a peristyle of four piers and eight columns, within which stands the font. The walls are eight feet seven inches thick above the lower plinth, and stand upon a platform, ascended by steps. There are also three steps, next the wall, in the interior. The lower story, externally, is surrounded by twenty columns, one foot eleven and three quarter inches in diameter, having Corinthian capitals, and supporting arches, their distances being unequal. There are four doors, one at each point of the compass, and sixteen windows. In the second story, there is an arcade of smaller columns, sixty in number, which project one foot four inches from the wall. The arches in both these stories are semicircular, but those of the second range are surmounted by decoration of a character entirely distinct, consisting of triangular canopies, alternating with lofty tabernacles and pinnacles. In each tympanum is a half figure, and upon each capital is a bust. The third story is a polygon of twenty sides, with walls five feet seven inches thick, and is occupied by windows of two lights each, divided by a mullion, supporting trefoiled arches under a circular head. Between the windows are flat pilasters, surmounted by small Gothic canopies, and above them a pointed gable, rising above the parapet. In the cupola are dormers with gables and crockets. The dome and its conical termination, along with some other parts of the building, are so much like similar portions in the old College of Physicians, War-

* The *Morning Herald* says on this subject,—"It is proposed to make Buckingham Palace inhabitable by alterations and additions, which, we fear, will add to the deformity of that unfortunate edifice without increasing the comfort or happiness of its illustrious inhabitants. We would entreat Ministers before they commence their patch-work to be warned by the remonstrance of Mr. Hume. It is no idle voice that they hear—no sper d'thrift who offers his money—no reckless arithmetician who knows not that thirty pence make half-a-crown, and that a penny saved is a penny earned. Mr. Nash, the first architect of Buckingham Palace, acknowledged the whole building to be 'a mistake.' Mr. Blore has been trying for some time to repair it, but according to his own 'report,' with very little success, and no satisfaction; for, as far as we are able to judge, the very kitchens and offices which he added, the attics that he raised, and the arrangements that he made, constitute many of the inconveniences which he exposes, and which render a residence in the palace less commodious to the Queen than an abode in the royal yacht."

† Vide pp. 378, 398.

‡ In Vol. III. of THE BUILDER will be seen an engraving of a curious font case, from a drawing by Mr. Traudes.

§ *Quarterly Review*, March, 1843, Gally Knight and Bunsen on "Ecclesiastical Architecture."